

MODERN ART OXFORD

EDUCATION NOTES

KERRY JAMES MARSHALL ALONG THE WAY



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ALONG THE WAY

MODERN ART OXFORD, 25 JULY TO 22 OCTOBER 2006

EDUCATION NOTES

Written by Miranda Millward, freelance educator and artist Catherine Lucktaylor, edited by Sarah Mossop, Community and Education Manager, Modern Art Oxford. The notes are not Key Stage specific but we hope they will be relevant to both secondary Art and Design and primary teachers. The potential for thematic approaches to the work is explored through an ideas page towards the end of these notes. Older secondary students may also find the notes useful for their critical and contextual studies and project ideas.

All images courtesy of the artist and Modern Art Oxford. Cover image: Souvenir II, Kerry James Marshall, 1997 (see back page for all image credits)

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EDUCATION EVENTS

The programme of events includes an Education Evening on 19 September including a tour of *Along the Way* by exhibition curator Deborah Smith. Exhibition talks and workshops are available for pre-booked school groups. To book, please contact Fiona Heathcote, Community and Education Co-ordinator on 01865 813827. Further information about the full programme of events and future exhibitions at Modern Art Oxford is available on the website: www.modernartoxford.org These Education Notes, as well as archived Notes from other exhibitions, can now be downloaded from the Modern Art Oxford website.

During *Along the Way* two exhibitions from **Arrivals> New Art from the EU** series will be on show in the Lower Gallery.

Arrivals>Cyprus - Christodoulos Panayiotou

Truly and Prologue: Quoting Absence

25 July to 9 September 2006

Arrivals>Slovakia – Ilona Németh

The Wall

14 September to 29 October 2006

KERRY JAMES MARSHALL – An Overview

I am on a mission of a sort, which has to do with the position of African-American artists within the narrative of art history – KJM

Kerry James Marshall was born in 1955 (the year Rosa Parks refused to give up her bus seat) in Birmingham Alabama. He first became interested in image and narrative (story) when his kindergarten teacher gave him a scrapbook to look at. The book contained images that she had collected from around the world and it fascinated the young Marshall. Marshall studied at the Otis Arts Institute in L.A. graduating in 1978 - he now lives and works in Chicago. As a teenager studying art he noticed the absence and invisibility of black artists in Western Art as well as the absence of black subjects.

Marshall's subject matter is rooted in African American popular culture and in the geography and politics of his upbringing. Marshall experienced the Civil Rights Movement, which his *Souvenir* series is based on, as well as the Watts Riots first hand. Marshall's junior school was only a few blocks from the head quarters of the Black Panthers (a radical organisation at the forefront of the Civil Rights Movement). It is against the backdrop of these events and places that he began to shape his worldview. Seeing the struggle of black people to gain political recognition Marshall began producing work that reflected their social and political reality.

Marshall paints his black figures using very black paint. This is in part to show how inaccurate the word black is to describe African-Americans (whose skin tones are brown). Marshall feels that black identity is pushed to the extremes of society and this is reflected in his extreme use of black. He wants to insert blackness into pictorial space and ultimately into Art History.

Marshall began working in collage which he sees as the beginning of the development of his later painted pieces. He uses a wide range of art-historical references such as the Renaissance, Black folk-art and El Greco. Marshall's painting work often uses elements of collage. He works in a variety of media: collage, painting and printing. He has also created a series of comic strip style pieces that feature black super-heroes. Marshall states this work addresses a gap in the comic market where there are no solo black super heroes.

Marshall says the title of his exhibition *Along the Way* comments on the journey he has made in creating his artwork over the last three decades.

Upper Gallery 1 (John Piper)

Black Goddess of the Silver Screen (1992) and So This is What you Want (1992)

These pieces deal with how black beauty is portrayed in the media. In the centre of *Black Goddess of the Silver Screen* there is a painting of Dorothy Dandridge the 1950s film star. Around the edge of the picture book covers from romantic novels have been collaged on. These covers show stereotypical white female beauty. In *So This is What you Want* ideas about inner and outer black beauty are explored.

- What do you think about the images of women on the book covers? How real are they in showing what white women look like?
- How has Marshall used text in these pieces? Could you add text to your work? How would it alter your piece?
- Compare how people of different races, religions and nationalities are represented in the media. Look at the music scene as well as films and T.V. Do you think that the media contributes to creating stereotypes?
- How do the central figures relate to the collage on the outside?
- How do the titles of the paintings relate to what is pictured?
- Experiment with collage in your work. This could be by adding collage to a self-portrait. How does this alter your image and how you present yourself?
- Why has Marshall put a halo on one of the women?

Vignette (2003)

This painting examines the Afrocentric and what Marshall sees as the sentimental idea that Africans exist in a state of harmony with nature and that this harmony will be restored once Africans are free from oppression. This painting could be seen as a black Adam and Eve running through the Garden of Eden accompanied by birds and butterflies.

- Do the natural surroundings look natural to you?
- How has Marshall applied the paint?
- What issues do you think Marshall might be commenting on in this piece?

Vignette Series, II to IV (2005)

My aim is to dissolve what I see as a lack of black figures in the foreground of mainstream art – KJM 2005

These are Marshall's most recent paintings. These paintings are based on Rococo paintings from the 18th Century in Western art. Rococo paintings were about love, pleasure, decadence, sentimentality and were often painted in a sumptuous way. In these pieces Marshall puts black couples as the central subjects of the paintings. In the Rococo era black people would have been servants and slaves and so would never have been central subjects of painting. Marshall's paintings are monochrome (black and white) which differs from the lavish colours of Rococo paintings. The only other colour is the pink love hearts on each image.

- Find out about traditional Rococo images. How are they similar or dissimilar to Marshall's paintings?
- Why has Marshall chosen to paint these images in monochrome?
- What colours do we usually associate with love and romance?
- What ideas is Marshall trying to communicate to the viewer?
- Do the figures look happy? Look carefully at what objects and scenery surround them? Why do you think Marshall has included these things?
- Look at symbols of love. Design your own piece based on love.
- Work in tones to create a portrait then add one colour to part of the image. How does your choice of colour alter the image?
- Do these images remind you of anything? Greetings cards, book covers...



Vignette IV, 2005

Could This be Love (1992)

This painting shows a room with two people in who are obviously lovers. The people in the picture look out at us the viewers. The room is painted in a detailed way and has many objects and symbols. The black statue in the background is the *Venus Negra* a West African symbol. The scale of the painting draws the viewer in.

- Look at the painting carefully. What is painted on and what is collaged on? Why do you think Marshall has chosen certain things to add as collage?
- Which objects are painted in a detailed way and which things are not? Think about why the artist has done this.
- The painting is large scale and similar to the size of a real room. How does this affect your viewing of the image? How would the painting be different if it was smaller?
- Do you learn anything about the identity of the two people by looking at objects in their room?
- Create a painting, collage or mixed media piece that shows your bedroom or home.
- This painting uses multiple modes of representation, collage, text, music, figures... Create your own piece that includes these things?
- Look at Marshall's favourites list (at the back of the notes) create your own.



Could This Be Love - 1997

Middle Gallery 1

This gallery also shows examples of wood-cuts that show West African spirits and examples of Marshall's preparatory drawings and studies.

At the End of the Wee Hours (1985-86)

I started with a self-portrait because it's an easy subject to use to explore bigger issues. You use yourself as a stand in for other things – KJM Chicago 2000

Marshall has worked with collage since the 1970s. The series of collages displayed in the gallery are from the mid-1980s. Here Marshall makes reference to the Cubist artists who were the first to use collage in their artworks from around 1909. Cubist artists traditionally used a monochrome colour scheme in their work. Marshall uses more colour in his work as well as more pictorial detail than Cubist artists.

- Find out about Cubist artists such as Picasso and Braque who used collage. How is Marshall's work similar or different to their work?
- Using images from magazines try and create some collages in the style of Marshall's ones.
- When you work with collage you can work quickly and change things you are not happy with easily. How does working like this alter the way you make art? Is it easier or harder to work like this?
- How can collage be used as a preparation for painting?
- Look at Marshall's painting work and look at his use of collage under and on top of the paint. Consider how you could texture the surface of your work before painting.

Rhythm Mastr (2003 - 2005)

... when the Black Panther became a character in the Fantastic Four comic books it caused me to realise something that he was the only black comic book character I'd ever seen. – KJM 2006

This piece of work takes the form of a comic strip created by Marshall. In America there are only 2 National Newspapers that have daily cartoons with black characters. Here Marshall takes the opportunity to balance this out by creating a comic strip with superheroes who are all black. The comic strips are part of an ongoing project called *Dailies* which will eventually be a book and possibly an animated film. The comic strips have between one and four frames and when displayed on the wall do not necessarily read in complete order (this is because Marshall believes that you can never fully follow your cartoon hero as you occasionally miss a day). The cartoons show sculpture from the African Art Institute in Chicago coming to life and also the demolition of the housing projects where many black people lived. Marshall described it as a Meta-comic which is a comic-strip about being a comic-strip.

- Which daily newspapers have regular comics? Why do some choose to have them and others not? What does this say about the type of paper they are? Serious? Not serious?
- Look at cartoon strips and comics. How are figures drawn? Do they look realistic? What features are exaggerated to give superheroes their characters?
- Try creating your own comic hero and comic strip. What would the story be? How many frames would it have? Would you use colour or black and white?
- Try creating lino-cuts of your comic strip to print multiple copies. Alternatively you could work using a computer and animate parts of your cartoon.
- Find out about other artists such as Pop Artist Roy Lichtenstein who has used comic style images in his work. You could also find out about the Africa lino artist John Mufanjego who has created lino prints telling stories of African life.
- What is the value of comics as art compared to the value of painting? Should comic strips be exhibited in the gallery?
- Look at the uses of cartoons from comic books and newspapers. Compare and contrast their uses. How and why do political cartoons and caricatures work well in conveying complex messages?

Middle Gallery 2

Two Invisible Men Naked (1985)

This piece comment on the invisibility of black people politically and socially. It is inspired by Ralph Ellison's 1952 novel *The Invisible Man* which comments on a black man's experience of living in America.

- What kind of issues is the artists addressing in these paintings?
- What do the figures remind you of? Do they look cartoon like to you?
- Are there other people in society who are invisible? Why is this?
- Look closely at the invisible man. What can you see?
- Experiment with creating and using tones of black paint. Try and create warm and cool tones of black. What is the difference?

Upper Gallery 2

Untitled (sculpture installation; 5 stamps; 3 pads; 5 relief prints) (1998)

The sculptural oversized stamps have the slogans of the Civil Rights Movement and the Black Power Movement on them. The Slogans are:

BLACK POWER

BY ANY MEANS NECESSARY

WE SHALL OVERCOME

BURN BABY BURN (from the Watts riots)

BLACK IS BEAUTIFUL

The red, black and green ink colours represent the colours of the Black Nationalist flag.

- Think about the way in which the prints of the stamps have been organised. Can the slogans be read as one big statement? How could they be rearranged to alter the message?
- Research the Civil Rights Movement and the Watts Riots. How does this period in American history make you feel? Do any of these slogans relate to the events of today? If so how?
- Think about where stamps like this are used: post offices, libraries etc. They are often official places – does this alter the way you relate to the stamps?
- Think about how slogans are used in adverts or as newspaper headlines. Write down the ones you think are powerful and try and explain why.
- Collect together newspaper headlines to discuss with your group. Try putting these headlines into themes or groups. What imagery do they evoke?
- Create your own stamp by making a simple collograph. Remember to reverse the lettering
- Why has Marshall made the stamps so large?

Momentos Series

Souvenir II (1997)

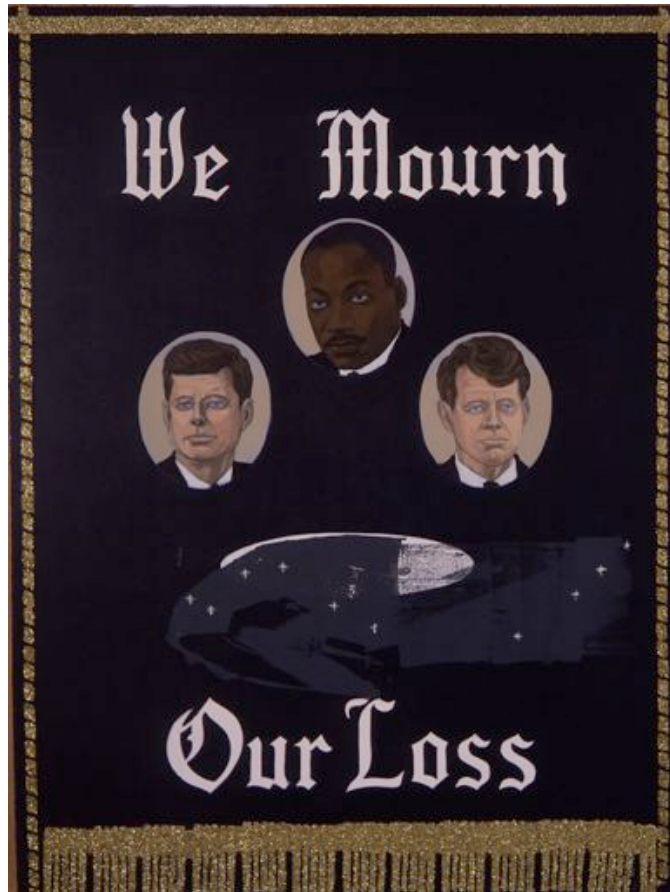
In this painting we see the interior of a typical African-American home of the 1960s/70s. In the background there is an image showing Martin Luther King (leader of the Civil Right Movement), John F Kennedy (American President in the early 1960s) and Robert F Kennedy (JFK's brother). All three were assassinated in the 1960s and became martyrs for their causes. In the foreground there is a lady holding flowers who has gold angel wings – this is reminiscent of Renaissance paintings of Annunciation angels who come to give news. At the top of the painting are a number of faces that have wings, which is like the cherubs featured in Renaissance paintings. These people also died because they stood up for their beliefs but their deaths have not been remembered as they were not famous.

- Why do you think Marshall has made reference to the Renaissance in this piece?
- Find out about the political figures in the painting such as Martin Luther King. How are they remembered – what is their legacy?
- What is Marshall trying to tell us in this piece?
- Look in the magazine rack. Are these magazines that you read? What does your choice of magazine say about you?
- Marshall has used glitter in this piece. Glitter is not usually associated with art galleries. What do you think of the use of glitter here? How is it like the use of gold in Renaissance paintings?

We Mourn Our Loss 1 & 4 (1997)

These paintings again show Martin Luther King and the Kennedy Brothers on an African-American style banner. In one of the paintings Marshall makes reference to his own father's death.

- Who do you think the important political figure of our time are?
- What do you think the phrase *We Mourn Our Loss* means?
- Why do you think Marshall has included the death of his father in this piece?
- Does repeating a phrase give it more impact?
- What do you think of the font (lettering style) Marshall has chosen to use for this piece?



We Mourn Our Loss 1, 1997

The American Dream series

Campfire Girls (1995) and Scout paintings

Campfire Girls along with the Scout paintings show an idealised image of the social-mobility of the black middle-classes through leisure pursuits. The Scouts is traditionally seen as a white middle-class teenage activity. It possibly comments on how some black people can feel successful if and when they are able to achieve the traditional pursuits of white people. Marshall places a few irregularities in the images e.g. the campfire is made of a burning tyre and it is difficult to see the detail of the Scouts badges. The scroll wrapped round the tree states the legal covenant that denies the girls proper housing.

- The Scouts and Guides in these images are not smiling. Why do you think this is?
- What do you think the words *Here I Am* mean?
- Why is there a Red Cross next to the tent? What do you think this means?
- What do you do with your leisure time? What are your hobbies? Create a painting or collage based on these themes.
- Look closely at Campfire girls. What type of landscape are they camping in? Why did Marshall choose this type of scenery?
- What do we learn about the identity of the Scouts from their portraits? How does the uniform project their social status?
- What is it like and what does it symbolise to be part of a group?
- Do these images comment on ideas about the “American Dream”?
- Would a portrait of you in your school uniform reflect the real you?



Scout (Boy) 1995

Garden Project Series

Nobody wanted to live in them. They were riddled with gang violence. So they ended up becoming the opposite of what their name suggested. – KJM Chicago 2000

C.H.I.A. (1994)

This painting comments on realities of everyday urban living in the 1960s. Many poorer black people ended up living in experimental social housing called *The Projects*. This housing had many problems including crime and social unrest. The estates were often given hopeful names such as *Rockwell Gardens* but as the level of poverty rose *The Projects* deteriorated. Marshall has described *The Projects* as 'warehouses for poor people'.

- How does where you live relate to who you are?
- Which bits of the painting represent hope and which represent despair?
- How would you create a visual representation of where you live? What aspects would you portray?
- What elements of your community are positive? Are there any negatives?
- Think about ideas relating to the theme of *home*. Is home a building or a feeling or something more complex? How does home relate your identity and culture.
- Create a painting using layers of paint. In some places work in a very detailed way in other places work more loosely with the paint. Consider printing over the top or using images transfer acetate to add further visual layers.
- What is the name of your street and how did it come about? Does the name reflect the area where you live?

Blue Water Silver Moon (Mermaid) (1991)

This is another image that comments on ideas about black female beauty.

- Where would you usually find images of mermaids?
- How is the painting technique used in the water different to Marshall's usual painting style? Look at a range of techniques for painting water and try some out.
- Why has Marshall collages faces into the water?
- Find out about representations of Yemaye the African goddess of the ocean.

The Lost Boys series (1993-95)

For a lot of kids growing up in the inner city, the question isn't whether they want to grow up, but whether they will have the opportunity. There was a period in the late 1980s and early 1990s when too many young kids were being killed in the crossfire of gang wars. I wanted to address this tragedy in my work' – KJM Chicago 2000

The two smaller portrait paintings commemorate young people who have died as a result of gang violence. Marshall uses halos and composition to reference the Renaissance painters. The style of painting and composition also relates to depictions of West African deities.

The Lost Boys (1993)

This painting takes its title from Peter Pan (J.M. Barrie). It comments on aspects of black American youth especially on issues of gang violence. Marshall believes that some children do not get chance to be children and get involved in dangerous situations. This painting is described by Marshall as a *History Painting* this means that it has the scale and composition of an old masterpiece by artists such as Gericault or David. The image uses collage, paint and drawing and highlights themes of image, identity and loss. Marshall shows the children playing with grown up toys such as cars and guns. The central figure commemorates a boy from L.A. who was accidentally killed by the police because they thought he was carrying a gun – it was in fact a pink water pistol. The dates on the painting show the dates of the American school summer vacation when children should be able to play safely, however, it is often the time when they are in the most danger. The orange cupid figure makes reference to the West African burial tradition where a favourite or last touched object is placed on graves.

- Is gang culture a problem in your community?
- Where do you feel safe and where do you not?
- Are young people expected to grow up too quickly?
- How do you spend your summer holiday?
- Creating a scrapbook based on a theme such as identity or travel or personal landscape. Create a scrapbook of images with notes.
- Could you create an image of your community? Would you show positive or negative aspects?
- What is an object that sums up your personality?
- Think about your favourite toys from childhood. What do they say about you in your younger years?
- What are the differences between American and British culture? Think about issues such as guns control.

Thematic Approaches

Below is a list of common themes running through Marshall's work. These could be used as a starting point for work based on the artist.

Telling stories
Portrait painting
Protest
History
Stereotypes
Identity
The Urban Environment
Using text in artwork
Heroes and role-models
Home and personal landscape
The American Dream
Collecting and "scrapbooking"
Representation of black people in art history
Art historical influences
Power
Gender
Religion
Composition
Reclaiming black identity
Death
Politics
Urban Icons
Presence / Absence

Kerry James Marshall: The Best of....

Music

I do not play no rock-n-roll Mississippi Fred McDowell 1969
Chester Burnett AKA Howlin Wolf
Terrorists Threats Ice Cube 2004
Doggy Style Snoop Doggy Dogg 2001
God Is Not Dead Dan Smith 1971
How Is The Time Dan Smith
Amazing Grace Aretha Franklin
The Dark Side of the Moon Pink Floyd 1990
Band of Gypsies Jimmy Hendricks
Lousiana Blues Robert Pete Williams 1959
This Bitter Earth Dinah Washington 1959

Films

Actors Revenge dir. Kon Ichikawa (1962)
Dragon Slayer dir. Matthew Robbins (1981)
The Chinese Connection dir. Wei Lo (1972)
Nothing But a Man dir. Michael Roemer (1964)
Dolemite II: The Human Tornado dir. Cliff Roquemore (1976)
Sweet Smell of Success dir. Alexander Mackendrick (1957)
Black Orpheus dir Marcel Camus (1959)
Breaking the Waves dir Lars von Trier (1996)
Alien dir Ridley Scott (1979)
Aliens dir. James Cameron (1986)
Xala dir. Ousmane Sembene (1975)

Books

Tales of 1001 Nights Sir Richard Burton, Modern Library (1997) ISBN 0679602356
Masks: Blackness, Race and the Imagination Adam Lively, Chatto & Windus 1998 ISBN 0701162449
Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance Huston Baker A. Jr., Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1989 ISBN 0226035255
Wild Seed Octavia E. Butler, Aspect 1991 ISBN 0446606723
Notebook of a Return to My Native Land Aimé Césaire, Wesleyan University Press 2001 ISBN 0819564524
The Prince Niccolo Machiavelli, Bedford/St. Martin's 2004 ISBN 0312149786
Les Chants de Maldoror Conte de Lautréamont, Distribooks 1999 ISBN 2877142280
The Subject of Semiotics Kaja Silverman, Oxford University Press 1984 ISBN 0195031784
The Devil Find Work James Balwin, Delta 2000 ISBN 0385334605

Kerry James Marshall: Gallery Reading List

(These books are available in the Modern Art Oxford entrance space for consultation)

Kerry James Marshall – Along The Way, Camden (exhibition catalogue. Price £14.99 from MAO shop)

Notebook of a Return to My Native Land, Aimé Césaire

Invisible Man, Ralph Ellison

Kerry James Marshall: One True Thing, Mediations on Black Aesthetics, Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, 2004

Kerry James Marshall: Mementos, Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago, 1998

Kerry James Marshall, published by Abrams, New York 2000

Working Spaces, Frank Stella Lectures 1983

Back to Black, Published by the Whitechapel Gallery

Rhapsodies in Black: The Art of the Harlem Renaissance, curated by David A. Bailey and Richard J. Powell

Recommended reading for children

Noughts and Crosses, Malorie Blackman (fiction for teenagers about racial divides)

No Room for Napoleon, Adria Meserve (for younger children about power, community, the environment and sharing)

Image Credits

Kerry James Marshall, *Scout (Boy)*, 1995

Acrylic and mixed media on canvas mounted on board

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, Partial and promised gift from the Lewis and Susan Manilow

Collection of Chicago Artists. Courtesy Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.

Kerry James Marshall, *Souvenir II*, 1997

Acrylic, collage and glitter on unstretched canvas banner

Purchased as the gift of the Addison Advisory Council in honor of John ("Jock") M. Reynolds's directorship of the

Addison Gallery of American Art, 1989-1998, Addison Gallery of American Art, Phillips Academy, Andover, Massachusetts

Kerry James Marshall, *We Mourn Our Loss 1*, 1997

Acrylic and glitter on MDF panel

Courtesy John and Sharon Hoffman

Kerry James Marshall, *Vignette IV*, 2005

Acrylic on plexiglass, Collection of the artist,

Courtesy Jack Shainman Gallery, New York

Kerry James Marshall, *Could this be love*, 1992

Acrylic and collage on canvas

Courtesy The Bailey Collection, Toronto

PLANNING YOUR GROUP VISIT TO MODERN ART OXFORD

Entry to the exhibitions is FREE. We request anyone planning to bring a group to call in advance:

- school and community group bookings please call 01865 813802
- HE/FE, (including Language and Summer Schools) and all other groups please call 01865 813800

If the Education Room is available it may be booked for group discussions and used for packed lunches (groups of up to 30 may use the room but there is only seating for 20). It is sometimes possible to provide a short introductory talk to exhibitions but at least 2 weeks notice is required. Contact Fiona Heathcote on 01865 813827 to check availability of the Education Room and introductory talks.

Opening Times

Tuesday to Saturday 10am to 5pm, Sunday 12pm to 5pm, closed Mondays.

Before entering the galleries

- Teachers and group leaders are responsible for their group throughout the visit and groups should be supervised at all times. **Please be aware of other visitors to the gallery and split large groups to 15 maximum, with at least one adult per group and stagger their entrance into the exhibition to make circulation of the exhibition easier.** If your group is larger than 30 we recommend that you split the groups **before** entering the gallery. Leave large bags in the lockers or coat area behind the Front Desk or in the Education Room if you have booked to use it.

In the galleries

Works of art can easily be damaged. Please remember to advise your group of the following:

- **Not to run in the gallery and be aware of other visitors to the gallery.**
- **Please ask your group to be especially careful not to touch the works of art in the galleries.**
- **Take care not to get too close to paintings – pointing at paintings risks them getting touched.**
- **Do not touch the sculptures, Kerry James Marshall exhibition includes large floor level ‘stamps’, advise groups to keep their distance.**

Photography

We're sorry, but photography is not permitted in this exhibition. If you are keen to have photographs of the Kerry James Marshall exhibition we suggest purchasing a copy of the illustrated exhibition catalogue. Special exhibition price: £14.99

Use of art materials in the gallery

Clean, dry materials such as pencils can be used in the gallery. No felt tip pens, wax crayons, pastels, paint or other potentially messy materials should be used.

Access

There is full access by lift to all floors. Parking for disabled visitors is close by on St. Ebbe's Street. There is a wheelchair accessible toilet on the lower ground floor. For assistance or enquiries please call Natasha Denness on 01865 722733. Large print versions of all information material are available on request at the Front Desk.

Please note: camera crews from Five may be present at some of our workshops and gallery activities this Summer and Autumn. Every care will be taken to give advance notice of events to be filmed. However, if you have any concerns or do not wish to appear on camera, please state at the time of booking or call the Front Desk on 01865 722733.